

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 0761

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR CH US VN

SUBJECT: TOUGHENED PRC PROPAGANDA STAND ON VIETNAM

REF: A. PEKING 708 B. STATE 88024 C. PEKING 743

1. THE RAPID PACE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA HAS VERY LIKELY TAKEN PEKING AS MUCH BY SURPRISE AS ANYONE ELSE, AND MAY HAVE INCREASED PRESSURE ON THE PRC TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR WHICH IT ORIGINALLY FELT IT HAD MORE TIME TO POSITION ITSELF. THE FALL OF CAMBODIA AND THE RAPID DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM, WHILE WELCOME OVER THE LONG RUN, RAISES THE POSSIBILITY OF HANOI MOVING INTO A POSITION OF PRE-EMINENCE IN INDOCHINA AT A PACE WHICH PEKING HAD NOT ANTICIPATED. IN THIS REGARD, WE NOTED WITH INTEREST HONG KONG'S 4225 IN WHICH A DRV OFFICIAL DISCUSSED WITH INDIAN CORRESPONDENT TIWARI A "CONFEDERATION" OF INDOCHINESE STATES AS ENUNCIATED IN 1970-71 CONFEDERATION OF INDO-CHINESE PEOPLES. THIS CONFEDERATION WOULD INEVITABLY BE DOMINATED BY HANOI AND THIS IN TURN WOULD PROBABLY ADD TO CHINESE CONCERNS ABOUT THE DANGER OF GROWING SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THE AREA AND POSSIBLE LACK OF ACCORD WITH A NEAR NEIGHBOR.

2. THE FALL OF INDOCHINA LIKELY WILL ACCELERATE TRENDS IN
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THAILAND, THE PHILIPPINES AND ELSEWHERE TO ADJUST THEIR

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MAJOR POWERS IN THE REGION, INCLUDING NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH PRC. HERE AGAIN, PEKING WOULD PROBABLY SEE THIS AS BEING IN ITS LONG TERM BENEFIT, BUT THE TIMING OF PRC STRATEGY MAY HAVE TO BE READJUSTED. A MORE RAPID DRAWDOWN OF U.S. FORCES IN THE AREA AND POTENTIALLY GREATER OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOVIET MEDDLING WOULD, IN PEKING'S EYES, BE INCREASED. AS LEE KUAN YEW HAS PUT IT, THE PRC AND THE USSR WOULD BE LEFT AS THE SOLE CONTENDING FORCES IN THE REGION.

3. THE ARRIVAL IN PEKING OF NORTH KOREAN LEADER KIM IL SUNG POSES THE KIND OF PROBLEMS WE WERE THINKING ABOUT WHEN WE SAID THAT THE PRC WOULD HAVE TO REVIEW ITS SOUTHEAST ASIAN POSTURE. AS REPORTED REF C, KIM SEEMS CLEARLY TO FEEL THAT EVENTS IN INDOCHINA OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DPRK TO EXERT GREATER PRESSURES ON THE SOVIET AND PEKING IS IN ALL LIKELIHOOD TREADING A VERY DELICATE LINE IN REAFFIRMING ITS FRATERNAL SUPPORT FOR PYONGYAND WHILE AVOIDING ANY COMMITMENT TO BACK THE NORTH KOREANS IN NEW ADVENTURES THAT COULD LEAD TO CONFRONTATION WITH THE U.S. SIMILAR PRESSURES FOR MORE MILITANT SUPPORT COULD WELL COME FROM SEVERAL OF THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN INSURGENT MOVEMENTS, AND PEKING WILL HAVE TO MAKE DECISIONS IN THE LIGHT OF ITS RELATIVE INFLUENCE VIS-A-VIS HANOI AND THE SOVIET UNION.

4. IN SUM, WHILE WE WERE NOT PREDICTING ANY DRAMATIC NEW MOVES BY THE PRC IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, THE PACE OF DEVELOPMENTS, THE NEW PRESSURES GENERATED AS A RESULT OF NORTH VIETNAMESE SUCCESSES, AND CONCERN ABOUT ITS RELATIVE POWER STANDING WILL VERY LIKELY REQUIRE A REVIEW OF THE ENTIRE SITUATION. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE HAVE NOTED WITH INTEREST THE FACT THAT CHANG CHUN-CHIAO HAS BEEN ABSENT FROM ALL OF THE CEREMONIAL FUNCTIONS SURROUNDING KIM IL SUNG'S AND BELGIAN PRIME MINISTER TINDEMAN'S VISITS. GIVEN HIS PAST ASSOCIATION WITH NORTH VIETNAMESE LEADERS, IT IS JUST POSSIBLE THAT HE HAS GONE SOUTH FOR SUCH A REVIEW. BUSH

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